



Washington State Senate

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Republican Caucus

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The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire
Legislative Building
Olympia, Washington 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Thank you for hosting today's conference call. It was good to begin the discussion about a possible special session versus across-the-board cuts to deal with the current revenue crisis. Your invitation to leadership of all four caucuses as well as senior budget writers shows your intention to address this issue in a truly bipartisan manner.

State law grants you the option of enacting across-the-board cuts to eliminate the projected general fund deficit. This option has been advocated by some legislators in recent weeks. Instead, we strongly advocate calling the Legislature into special session. This will allow us to make strategic cuts in a compassionate way that prioritizes the values of the people of Washington. As lawmakers, it is our duty to make needed reductions in a thoughtful way.

We do not believe that services for the developmentally disabled should be cut at the same rate as spending on tourism, that funding for elderly in nursing homes should be cut at the same rate as health care for illegal immigrants or that financial aid for needy students should be cut at the same rate as public-art funding. However under an across-the-board cuts approach, this would be the inevitable outcome.

Additionally, last month's state revenue collections came in \$84.5 million under target. While you are authorized to make across-the-board cuts to eliminate the general fund deficit, doing so would not account for any further drop in revenue should the September revenue forecast be markedly lower. We do not wish to see you forced to make yet another round of cuts just a few months later. Calling the Legislature into special session would allow lawmakers to resolve the current deficit and leave money in reserve to help compensate for any additional revenue shortfall.

We urge you to consider these points as you weigh your decision, and please know that we will make ourselves available to you at any time for assistance.

Sincerely,

Sen. Mike Hewitt
Senate Republican Leader

Sen. Joseph Zarelli
Ranking Republican, Senate Ways and Means Committee